

In effect, the President of the United States can say we have to have the Royalty Relief Program in order to get the oil industry moving again in our country. But with prices high and no argument for these breaks, not on the basis of my judgment but on the basis of what the President has said in the past, I want to cut off these particular breaks.

I hope my colleagues will want to save our taxpayers money and promote fiscal responsibility. This is a program which is completely out of control. This is a program which has lost its moorings. You cannot defend this, in my view, in front of any group of our citizens. That is why a variety of leaders and individuals in the private sector, many of them coming from the oil industry itself, have said there is no logical argument for royalty relief at this particular time.

Certainly there are going to be some who will say it is never enough. There is litigation going on now where some companies are in court trying to secure additional information. I am looking at a recent article in the press authored by Edmund L. Andrews headlined: "General Accounting Office Sees Loss in Oil Royalties of at Least \$20 Billion."

We know that the Government Accountability Office isn't an organization with any ax to grind. They are our nonpartisan investigators. Those are the people who take out the sharp pencil and are given the job of actually looking to see if taxpayer money is being used wisely. They have essentially said recently—this year, just months ago—that billions of dollars

are going to be wasted with this Royalty Relief Program.

The Interior Department has indicated that they know they are going to lose billions of dollars in royalty payments. I don't see anybody saying that the price of oil is going to fall precipitously anytime soon. If it does, the President and the Department of Energy can essentially waive my amendment. We explicitly say that if the price of oil goes down, if there are any national security questions, any disruptions that threaten supply, the amendment can be set aside.

It is time to rein in these costs that are going through the stratosphere. The Royalty Relief Program is the granddaddy of all subsidies. I hope tomorrow, when the Senate has an opportunity to vote, we will say that we ought to prohibit further royalty relief, unless prices go down or we face a disruption, and save our citizens' hard-earned tax dollars for more worthy causes.

Mr. President, I hope my colleagues will support this amendment.

I yield the floor. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. COBURN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I am going to propound a unanimous consent request for wrap-up momentarily.

I will also note, as I have been speaking on this amendment to forego some royalty relief for oil companies, that when we go back in at approximately 10 o'clock, I will continue a discussion regarding this amendment and hopefully have a chance to hear from colleagues on both sides of the aisle.

ORDER FOR FILING

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that, notwithstanding the adjournment of the Senate, the RECORD remain open this evening until 8:45 p.m. in order for Senator FRIST or his designee to submit a statement relating to a notice of the suspension of the rules relative to the supplemental bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 9:30 A.M. TOMORROW

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in adjournment until 9:30 tomorrow morning.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 7:47 p.m., adjourned until Thursday, April 27, 2006, at 9:30 a.m.

CONFIRMATION

Executive nomination confirmed by the Senate Wednesday, April 26, 2006:

THE JUDICIARY

PATRICK JOSEPH SCHILTZ, OF MINNESOTA, TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE DISTRICT OF MINNESOTA.